

a problem, blame somebody else,” to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make. If you’re fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you’re responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you’re worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you’re responsible for doing something about it. If you’re a CEO in corporate America, you’re responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility culture, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we’d like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, when the challenges are difficult, when the choices are clear, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I’ll never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, “Whatever it takes.” One man pointed at me and said, “Don’t let me down.” As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I’ve also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the

American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I’ve seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I’ve seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I’ve seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We’ve all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:03 p.m. at the Fairmont Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Louis A. Beecherl, Jr., Dallas regional finance chairman, Jeanne Johnson Phillips, Texas State finance vice chairman, J. Roger Williams, north Texas regional finance chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney ’04, Inc.; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas; Fred Meyer, chairman, Republican National Committee Presidential Victory Team; Shirley L. Johnson, wife of Representative Sam Johnson of Texas; Susan Combs, commissioner, Texas Department of Agriculture; Victor G. Carrillo, chairman, and Michael L. Williams, commissioner, Railroad Commission of Texas; Tom Craddick, speaker, Texas State House of Representatives; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Houston, Texas *March 8, 2004*

Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated—*[laughter]*—unless you don’t have a seat.

Thanks for a great Houston welcome. I’m so glad to be back home. Nothing like a

weekend in Texas to kind of refresh the soul. By the way, if you see 41, tell him I was asking about him—[*laughter*—or Mother, over there at the Rice Epicurean. [*Laughter*] I do want to thank you all for being so kind to Mother and Dad. They love Houston. They love the citizens of Houston. They're proud to call this place home, just like I'm proud to call Texas home.

I'm feeling pretty good about my chances in Texas. [*Laughter*] But I'm not going to take anything for granted. With your help, Texas is going to be the cornerstone for a national victory in November of this year. Vice President Cheney and I are looking forward to working here in Texas to get as many votes as we can get. If you think about the Vice President, I picked the right man. Dick Cheney is doing a great job. I like to tell people, Vice President Cheney is the greatest Vice President the country has ever had. One time Mother said, "Wait a minute." [*Laughter*]

I married the greatest First Lady the country has ever had—Mother included. [*Laughter*] Laura sends her love. I'm really proud of her. She is steady and strong, decent and compassionate. I'm lucky she said, yes when I said, "Will you marry me?"

I'm proud to be here with Rich Kinder and Nancy. I want to thank them for their loyal friendship. He said, 4 years ago he introduced me. He's been introducing me for years and years and years, and I'm grateful for that.

I'm proud to be here with the great Governor of the State of Texas, Rick Perry. He's doing a fine job for the people of Texas, all the people of Texas.

We're blessed to have a great congressional delegation in Washington. I take great comfort in knowing that Kay Bailey Hutchison represents the State of Texas. She's a leader on the Senate floor. If you need to get anything done in the Senate, you give Kay Bailey a holler. [*Laughter*] I'm also proud that John Cornyn is rep-

resenting our State so well in the United States Senate.

Tom DeLay can deliver the vote. We've had a great record of accomplishment, working together. But make no mistake about it, this guy can deliver the vote in the House of Representatives, and the country is better off for it.

Joe Barton is with us tonight. I want to thank Joe for coming. He's a Congressman from up north—that is, north of Texas. [*Laughter*] Kevin Brady is with us. Congressman Brady, thank you for coming. Congressman Culberson is here from the great city of Houston. I'm honored you're here, John. Congressman Neugebauer from Lubbock is with us today too. Randy, thank you for coming. You're probably wondering why the Congressman from Lubbock came all the way over to Houston to hear me speak. He heard Air Force One is flying back to Washington after the speech. [*Laughter*] I think you'll like the accommodations. [*Laughter*]

I'm proud of my friend Fred Meyer for being the State finance chairman for the State of Texas. Thank you, Fred, and Jeanne Johnson Phillips. My friend Mercer Reynolds, the national finance chairman—he's from Cincinnati, Ohio. We let him come into Texas anyway. [*Laughter*] And he's doing a great job. I'm proud of Mercer and proud of you all, for all of you have worked hard, particularly this cast of characters sitting on the stage. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for being good friends and for helping us prepare for what's going to be a good, strong campaign.

I finally got an opponent. [*Laughter*] And I called him last Tuesday to congratulate him, and I told him I'm looking forward to a spirited campaign. It's going to be an interesting debate on the issues. He spent two decades in Washington, and he's built up quite a record. Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue.

[*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly has strong beliefs. They just don't last very long. [*Laughter*]

The voters have a very clear choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. They have a clear choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I look forward to putting these alternatives squarely before the American people. I look forward to this campaign.

We've achieved great things the last 3 years, and I look forward to telling the American people that. But most importantly, we have a positive vision for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and for extending peace and freedom throughout our world, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. We'll leave no doubt where we stand, and come November, we'll be re-elected for 4 more years.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with the stock market in decline, and our economy was heading into recession. But we acted. We delivered historic tax relief for the American people, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it very clear, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the

Al Qaida network, and the rest will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. And once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to office, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated. We gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can doubt the strength and the skill and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to gridlock, and old problems were used to score points. Old problems were politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. We came to the Nation's Capital to get some things done for the people. We passed major reforms to raise the standards in public schools. We passed reforms in Medicare to give prescription drugs and choices to seniors. We chose to lead, and we have delivered for the American people.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents or future generations. A President must stand up, make tough decisions, and keep his commitments. And that is how I will continue to lead our great Nation. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake.

My opponent hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far all we hear from the other side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. I'll take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination. Dick Cheney and I will

make it clear to this country, we are ready to lead our Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the biggest—with the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we've left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government could have.

Because we acted, the economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation are low. Homeownership is at its highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added more than 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief is working.

My opponent has plans for those tax cuts. [Laughter] He wants to take them away. He will use that money to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea: To keep this economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing. We need fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits. We need to control needless regulation. We need to help control the cost of health care by association health care plans, by health savings accounts. We need medical liability reform at the Federal level. This country ought to be opening up markets, new markets, for our farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize our electricity system and make this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

My opponent talks about job creation, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is our pro-

growth, pro-entrepreneur, small business-owner economic agenda.

This economy is changing, and people need skills. All skills start with education, so I worked with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. It's a good law. We're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar for every single child. We've demanded accountability in our public school system. We expect the schools to teach our children how to read and write and add and subtract, so not one single child is left behind in this country.

We have a plan to help our high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We've got an aggressive plan to help our community colleges to train the workers for the industries, the new jobs being created for the 21st century. Education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and this administration understands the gate must be open to all Americans.

We're also working hard to make sure America promotes ownership. We promoted an ownership society in this administration. We want more people to own their own homes. We want people to own their own savings. We want more people owning their own small businesses. We want people to own and manage their health care plans. We want younger workers to own and manage their retirement under the Social Security system. We understand that when people have assets of their own, they gain independence and security and dignity and more control over their future. I believe in private property so much, I want every American to have some.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts. He's against putting patients in charge of Medicare. He's against the tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority and more choices and more control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give

the orders, and you pay the bills. [*Laughter*] I got news for the Washington crowd. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance; the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; the dictator now sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Government, of our country. In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, he chose defiance. And so I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman or take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend our country every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove him from

power. [*Laughter*] Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam Hussein's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. You see, they know that a free Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause for terror. That's what they know, and they're right. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. They don't really understand our country. America will never be intimidated by thugs or assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq to build a free society, which will make the whole world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move towards self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object. [*Laughter*] I'm for united action, and so are 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. America must never outsource America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Just the other day,

my opponent indicated that he's not comfortable using the word "war" to describe the struggle we're in. He said, "I don't want to use that terminology." He also said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation. I strongly disagree. Our Nation followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

One very important part of this war is intelligence gathering, as Senator Kerry says. Yet in 1995, 2 years after the first attack on the World Trade Center, my opponent introduced a bill to cut the overall intelligence budget by \$1.5 billion. His bill was so deeply irresponsible that he didn't have a single cosponsor in the United States Senate. [*Laughter*] Once again, Senator Kerry is trying to have it both ways. He's for good intelligence, yet he was willing to gut the intelligence services. And that is no way to lead our Nation in a time of war.

Our intelligence professionals are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. And so are the men and women of the United States military. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege—the high privilege—of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage, and I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values

we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We are strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups from all faiths, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which each person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a new culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders

and your employees. And in this new responsibility culture, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of the leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period where the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, the choices are clear, a time when resolve is needed. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began.

On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." I remember a guy pointing at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this country. Not long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet

serious challenges or our ability to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. And the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the Hilton Americas. In his remarks, he referred to Rich and Nancy Kinder, fundraisers, Jeanne Johnson Phillips, Texas State finance vice chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas; Fred Meyer, chairman, Republican National Committee Presidential Victory Team; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on the Completion of the Transitional Administrative Law in Iraq

March 8, 2004

I congratulate the Iraqi Governing Council and the Iraqi people on completing the Transitional Administrative Law for Iraq. This document is an important step toward the establishment of a sovereign government on June 30. It lays the foundation for democratic elections and for a new constitution, which will be written by an elected Iraqi assembly and approved by the Iraqi people.

This law provides a framework for continued cooperation among Iraq, members of the international Coalition, and the United Nations as the Iraqi people make progress towards democracy. And it provides the essential freedoms and rights to all Iraqis regardless of gender, religion, or ethnic origin—including freedom of religion, freedom of speech and assembly, the right to a fair trial, and the right to choose their own representatives.